

Story #435 (Tape #6, 1972)

Narrator: Huseyin Celan, 62

Location: Taşpınar, nahiye of Aksaray
kaza in Niğde Province

Date: 1972

Lament for Nuri Bey

[Song which is not here translated.]

There was a ³goldsmith who once camped on the pasture of a certain village. He was a man who made gold bracelets and rings. The lord of that village went to him and ordered several rings and bracelets. Now this goldsmith was a Circassian,¹ and the intention of the lord was simply to harass him. As this went on, the goldsmith could not help shooting Nuri Bey, the lord. The elegy that you have just heard is one composed by Nuri Bey's widow after her husband had been shot.

His wife's name was Safiye Hatun

Five golden coins together.²

Ahmet Uysal: Where did this happen?

Narrator: It was at a place in Yozgat Province.

¹ The Circassians have been a force in Turkish history for the past four centuries. Originally Christianized, they remained so until the 17th century when they were Moslemized. A Caucasian people, they refused to be [completely assimilated by the encroaching Russian empire, and when, in 1864, the Russians completed the captivity of their homeland, thousands migrated to Turkey. The men were fierce, proud warriors, and their light-complexioned women were popular in the Ottoman harems. Many were sold into white slavery. When the Avşars of Central Anatolia became troublesome, Circassians were settled in their area, and there has been, ever since, rivalry between the two groups. For some Turks Circassians are still considered "outsiders," and, as such, are fair game for abuse.

² Just how beşi birlik fits into these two lines of verse is not clear.